

South Dakota State University

## Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange

---

Agricultural Experiment Station Rural Sociology  
Pamphlets

SDSU Agricultural Experiment Station

---

6-15-1941

# The Problem of Population Adjustments in Hyde County

W. F. Kumlien

C. Scandrette

Raymond Hatch

Follow this and additional works at: [http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/agexperimentsta\\_rural-socio](http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/agexperimentsta_rural-socio)



Part of the [Rural Sociology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

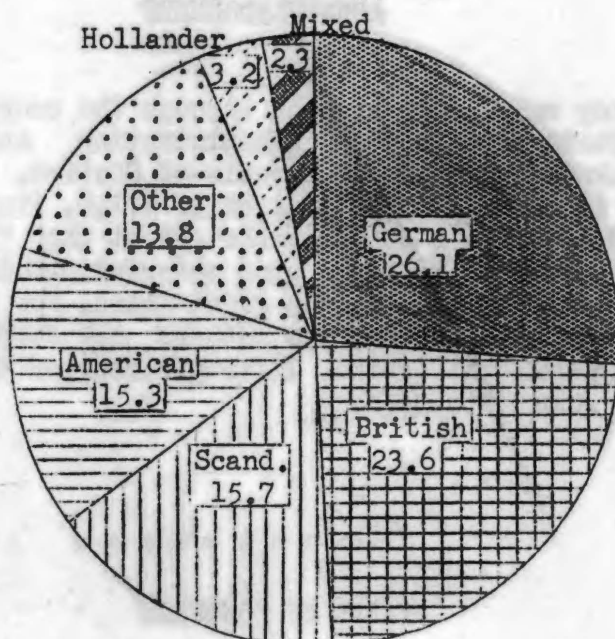
Kumlien, W. F.; Scandrette, C.; and Hatch, Raymond, "The Problem of Population Adjustments in Hyde County" (1941). *Agricultural Experiment Station Rural Sociology Pamphlets*. 31.  
[http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/agexperimentsta\\_rural-socio/31](http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/agexperimentsta_rural-socio/31)

This Pamphlet is brought to you for free and open access by the SDSU Agricultural Experiment Station at Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Agricultural Experiment Station Rural Sociology Pamphlets by an authorized administrator of Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. For more information, please contact [michael.biondo@sdstate.edu](mailto:michael.biondo@sdstate.edu).

THE PROBLEM OF POPULATION ADJUSTMENTS  
in  
Hyde County

W. F. Kumlien  
C. Scandrette  
Raymond Hatch

Nationality of Farm Household Heads  
in Hyde County, 1938



In order to understand the social interactions of any population group, one must know their nationality background. Differences in work customs, educational traditions, recreational interests, neighborhood persistence, religious beliefs, agricultural practices, thrift and frugality, progressive tendencies, and other activities and attitudes can be partially explained by variations in nationality background.

## EXPLANATORY NOTE

During recent years the following significant changes have occurred in the composition and distribution of population in Hyde county: the total population has declined; the proportion in the younger age groups has decreased while the proportion in the older age groups has increased; the sex ratio has become more nearly equal; the percentage of foreign born has decreased; the birth rate has been sharply curtailed; and tenancy has increased. Some of these changes have come about as adjustments to changing social and economic conditions. Because a lag always exists between a changing population pattern and long established social institutional patterns, it is now recognized that some of these population changes call for widespread social readjustment.

\* \* \* \* \*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study was made possible through the cooperation of the State Work Projects Administration and the South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station. The project is officially designated as W.P.A. Project No. 665-74-3-143. To a considerable extent the findings of this pamphlet are based upon material obtained from Farm Security Administration grant files. For permission to use these files, the authors are deeply indebted to Mr. Emil Loriks, State Director of the Farm Security Administration.

\* \* \* \* \*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introductory Statement . . . . .	1
Farm Population Losses by Townships, 1930-40 . . . . .	2
Percentage of Farm Tenancy, by Townships, 1938 . . . . .	3
Predominant Nationalities in the Farm Population by Townships, 1938 . . . . .	4
Number of Births Per 1000 of the Population, 1920 - 1940 . . . . .	5
Age Distribution of the Farm Population, 1930 and 1938 . . . . .	6
Sex Distribution of the Farm Population, 1915 to 1938 . . . . .	7
Adjustments required by Changing Population Trends . . . . .	8

# The Problem of Population Adjustments in Hyde County

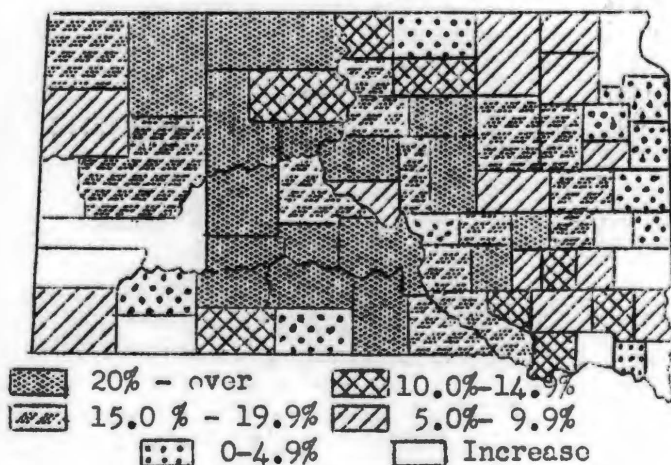
\* \* \* \* \*

## Introductory Statement

The 1940 census reveals that only six states had decreases in population between 1930 and 1940. In one of these, Vermont, the loss was negligible, amounting to only 380 persons. Losses were substantial in the five other states—North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma—which form a north-south band across the United States in what is known as the Great Plains area. It is a region of relatively light rainfall even in normal times, and during the decade 1930-1940 it was the area which suffered most heavily from the severe drouth. In each of the five states, rainfall was below normal in at least seven of the ten years.

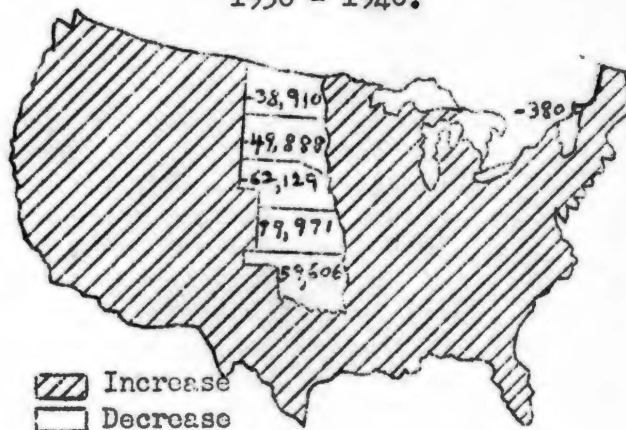
South Dakota, with only 82 percent normal rainfall during the period, was the state hardest hit, with precipitation below normal in each of the ten years. The drouth was the most severe and most prolonged since the weather records were begun in South Dakota in 1890. In 1934, when precipitation reached an all-

Figure 2. Gains or Losses in South Dakota Population by Counties, 1930-40.



to 15.6 percent. It will be noted that counties in the central and western parts of the state (the Black Hills area excluded) where drouth has been most pronounced, suffered the greatest losses. It is of importance to note that it was these counties which have also had the highest per capita expenditure for relief.

Figure 1. States Showing Decreased Population 1930 - 1940.



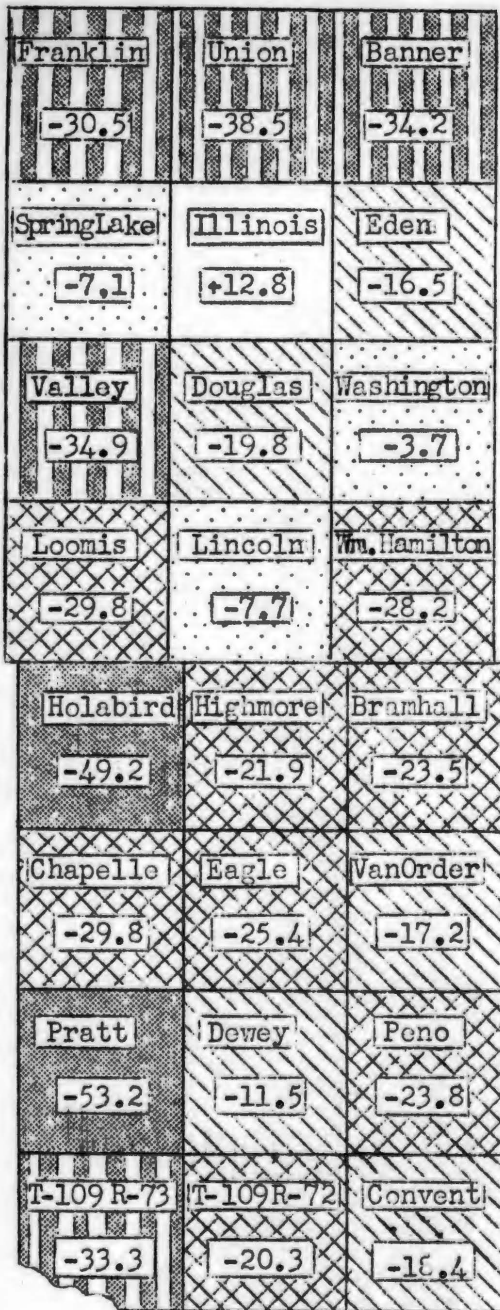
low of 13.2 inches for the state, crop failure amounted to nearly 100 percent in over two-thirds of the counties. The unprecedented drouth not only caused many families to leave the state but also resulted in heavy relief loads. During the period of July, 1933, through June, 1935, South Dakota led all other states in the percentage of its population on federal relief.\*

Population losses in South Dakota were not evenly distributed throughout the state, as shown in Figure 2. Sixty of the 69 counties lost in population between 1930 and 1940, but the losses ranged from less than 2 percent to over 30 percent. In Hyde county the decline amounted







\*Kumlien, W. F., A Graphic Summary of the Relief Situation in South Dakota, 1930-1935, Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin Number 310, South Dakota State College, Brookings, South Dakota.



Figure 3. Farm Population Losses in Hyde County by Townships, 1930 - 1940.



Legend:

	Increase in population
	Loss of 0.0 - 9.9%
	Loss of 10.0 - 19.9%
	Loss of 20.0 - 29.9%
	Loss of 30.0 - 39.9%
	Loss of 40.0% or over

Source: Final Releases of 1940 U. S. Census.

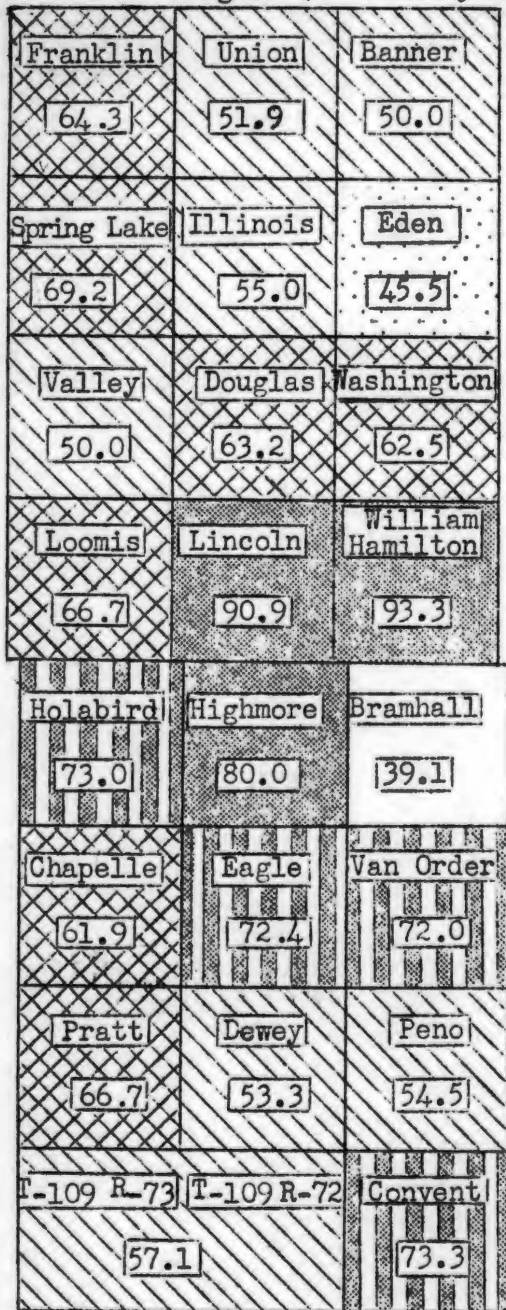
A major factor in the population decrease of 15.6 percent in Hyde county, 1930-40, was the heavy migration of individuals and families from farming areas of the county. Figure 3 shows the percentage change of the farm population in each township during the decade. The range was from a loss of 53.2 percent in Pratt township to an increase of 12.8 percent in Illinois township. While losses were general throughout the county, it will be noted that the northern and western tiers of townships suffered the greatest decimation of farm population. In seven of those townships losses exceeded 30 percent of their 1930 numbers.

Table I (below) indicates the uneven rate of population growth in Hyde county, 1890 to 1940. It will be noted that after the initial influx of settlers a decline occurred during the decade 1890 to 1900, which was even greater than that of the past decade. The first ten years of the twentieth century comprised a period of rapid settlement, with the result that the population more than doubled. Population growth proceeded at a slower rate till 1930, with the 15.6 percent decline, 1930 to 1940, reducing the population below that of 1910.

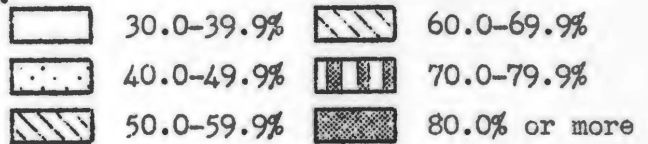
Table I. Total Population and the Increase or Decrease by Decades, Hyde County, 1890 - 1940.

Year	Total Population	Increase	Percent Increase
1940	3,113	-577	-15.6
1930	3,690	375	11.3
1920	3,315	8	0.2
1910	3,307	1,815	121.6
1900	1,492	-368	-19.8
1890	1,860	----	----

Figure 4. Tenancy Rate in Hyde County, by Townships, 1938.



Legend:



According to the 1940 U. S. Agricultural Census, 62.7 percent of the farm operators in Hyde county that year were tenants (see Table II). A survey conducted in 1938 revealed a strikingly similar tenancy rate of 63.5 percent. Figure 4 shows the variations in proportion of tenancy among the townships of Hyde county in 1938. It will be noted that the percentage which renters were of all farm operators ranged from 39.1 in Bramhall township to 93.3 in William Hamilton township. In ten townships two-thirds or more of all farm operators were listed as tenants. The central portion of the county was the area of greatest tenancy.

Table II (below) shows two significant developments -- a steady and uninterrupted increase in the tenancy rate from 11.6 in 1890 to 62.7 in 1940, and a substantial increase in the average size of farms, from 210.7 acres in 1890 to 845.2 acres in 1940. The latter trend appears to be a healthy one, as it indicates an essential adjustment to a farm unit adequate for the support of a family. However, the increase in tenancy, heightened by recent drouth, mortgage foreclosures and tax delinquency, is not so desirable. Because of the usual insecurity of the renter's tenure, social organization tend to be relatively weak and unstable in tenant dominated areas. Less interest is evidenced in conserving land resources and making needed improvements. Furthermore, absentee landlords become chiefly interested in the return from the farm, and they oppose community betterment insofar as it raises taxes.

Source: Farm Security Records supplemented by other sources.

Table II. Trends in Tenancy Rate, Number of Farms and Average Size of Farms, Hyde County, 1890 - 1940.

Year	Tenancy Rate	No. of Farms	Average Size (in acres)
1940	62.7	593	845.2
1930	42.6	634	699.8
1920	27.0	463	766.2
1910	18.6	481	441.2
1900	13.4	277	339.2
1890	11.6	387	210.7

Source: U. S. Census Reports

Figure 5. Leading Nationalities\* of Farm Operators in Hyde County Townships, 1938

Franklin	Union	Banner
Brit. 42.9 Scand. 21.4	Ger. 40.7	Bohem. 61.5
Spring Lake	Illinois	Eden
	Scand. 30.0 Amer. 25.0	
Scand. 38.4	Ger. 20.0	Bohem. 59.1
Valley	Douglas	Washington
Ger. 44.4 Brit. 22.2	Amer. 37.5 Scand. 31.6	Ger. 37.5
Loomis	Lincoln	Wm. Hamilton
Brit. 27.8 Ger. 27.8 Scand. 22.2	Brit. 36.4 Scand. 27.3 Ger. 27.2	Amer. 26.7 Ger. 20.0 Brit. 20.0 Bohem. 20.0
Holabird	Highmore	Bramhall
Brit. 46.0 Amer. 21.6	Ger. 42.5 Brit. 22.5	Brit. 47.8 Ger. 26.1
Chapelle	Eagle	VanOrder
Brit. 23.8 Fr. 23.8	Ger. 60.0 Brit. 20.0	Brit. 28.0 Ger. 24.0 Amer. 24.0
Pratt	Dewey	Peno
Brit. 33.3 Scand. 33.3 Ger. 22.2	Brit. 40.0 Ger. 33.3	Brit. 36.4 Ger. 22.7
T-109 R-73	T-109 R-72	Convent
	Ger. 33.3 Ind. 26.7 Brit. 20.0	Scand. 46.7 Ger. 26.7

\* All nationalities comprising 20 percent or more of the farm operators.

Source: Farm Security Records, supplemented by other sources.

The distribution of the major nationality groups in the Hyde county farm population is shown in Figure 5. Of the 471 farm operators, 26.1 percent were Germans, 23.6 percent were British, 15.7 percent were Scandinavian, 15.3 percent were American, 2.3 percent were Hollander, 2.3 percent mixed, and 13.8 percent other (largely Bohemian). The British, despite its ranking behind the German, was the leading nationality in nine central and southern townships of the county (it shared this distinction with the French in one of these and with the German in another), as well as in Franklin Township in the northwest corner. The Germans predominated in eight townships scattered throughout the county. In three townships the Scandinavians were the most numerous group, while the Americans and Bohemians each had a plurality in two townships in the north central and northeast portions of the county, respectively.

As previously observed, nationality background is an important factor in determining the habits, attitudes and customs of a group. One of the significant relationships borne out by this study is that which exists between nationality and denominational preference. The Scandinavians, for instance, persist in the Lutheran denomination—that of their native land. Germans in Hyde county also prefer the Lutheran in greater numbers than any other denomination, although the Catholic and Methodist churches enlist considerable numbers from among the German group. The British fall rather distinctly into two groups—Methodists (35.1 percent) and the Catholic (27.0 percent). The English element accounts for the Methodist preference, while the Irish portion of the British group is predominantly Catholic. The Bohemians are also staunchly Catholic, while the American and mixed groups are

rather evenly divided among the major denominations. Since these groups are made up of those who no longer trace their nationality back to the country of origin, one is led to believe that with the passing of time and the merging of culture patterns, distinct nationality characteristics—church preference and others—tend gradually to disappear.

Figure 6. Number of Births and Deaths Per 1000 of the Population in Hyde County, 1920 - 1940

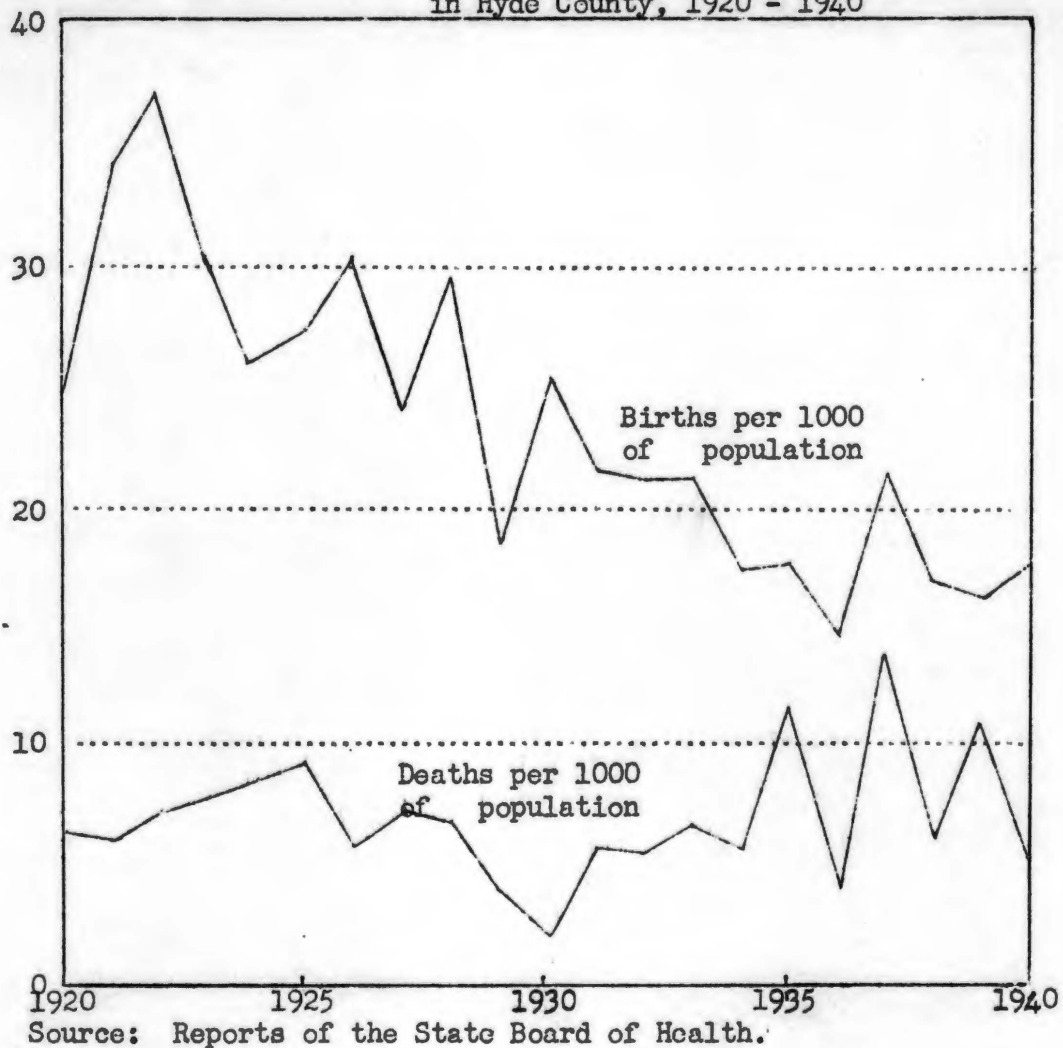
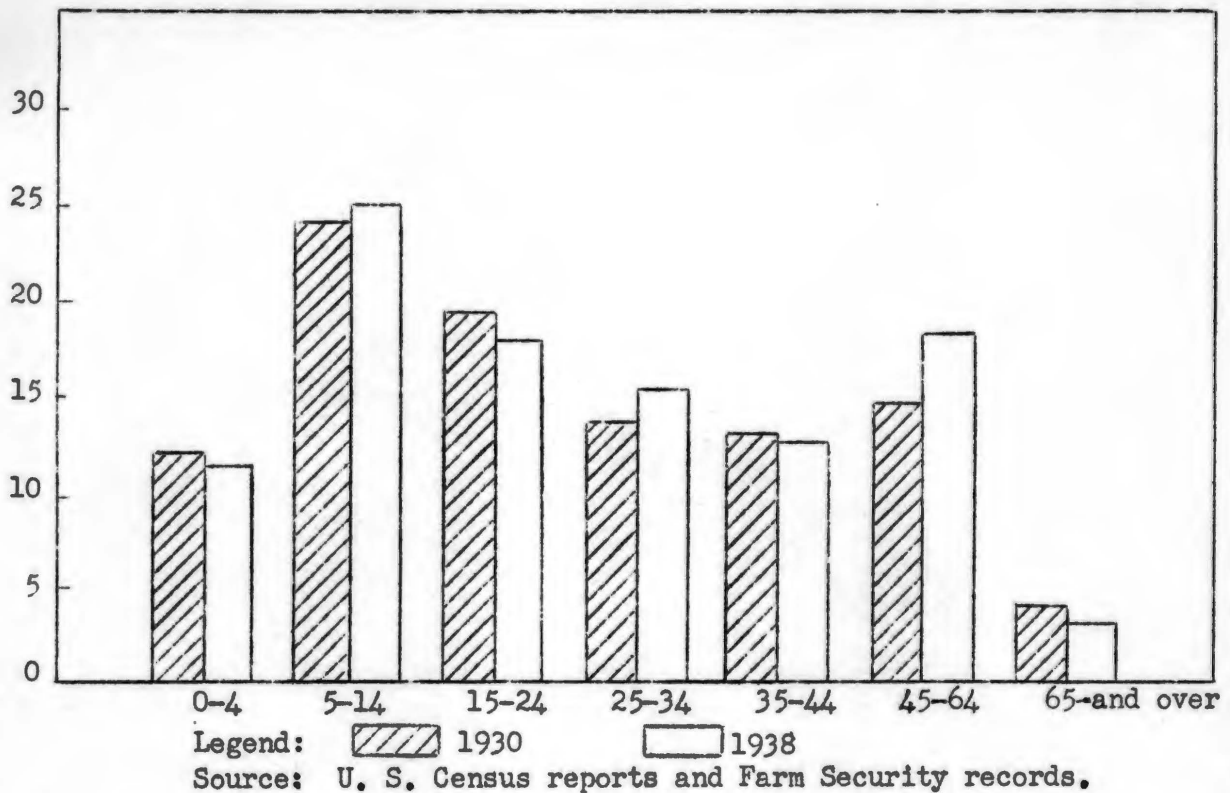


Figure 6 shows the trends in birth and death rates in Hyde county, 1920 - 1940. It will be noted that the two rates are approaching some degree of equality. This situation is resulting from the marked decline in the birth rate and the fact that the death rate is no longer being decreased, but actually appears to be turning upward. Because the number of births in any given year probably does not represent fairly the prevailing level of the birth rate, a five-year average for the beginning and end of the period was used for comparative purposes. For the interval 1920-1924 the average was 30.6 births per thousand of the population, while during 1936-1940 the average had dropped to only 17.4 births. Since the period of greatest saving and prolonging of lives through medical science is past and since the population is gradually aging, a slightly rising death rate is in prospect.

Some of the principal factors in the declining birth rate are the desire for a higher standard of living, the adversity of economic conditions, and the increased knowledge of contraceptive measures. One of the most serious problems produced by the drop in the birth rate has been that of declining elementary enrollments. Between 1929 and 1940 enrollments in elementary schools of Hyde county fell off nearly 40 percent—from 898 to 541 pupils. Thirteen schools had been closed by 1940, while 16 of the remaining 33 schools had enrollments of 10 or fewer pupils, and consequently were operating at very high costs per pupil. While loss of population through migration was partially responsible for the enrollment slump, it is felt that the decline in the birth rate has been the chief factor. (A more complete discussion of the problem may be found in Rural Sociology Pamphlet 10, The Problem of Declining Enrollment in the Elementary Schools of Hyde County.)



Figure 7. Age Distribution of the Farm Population in Hyde County, 1930 - 1938.



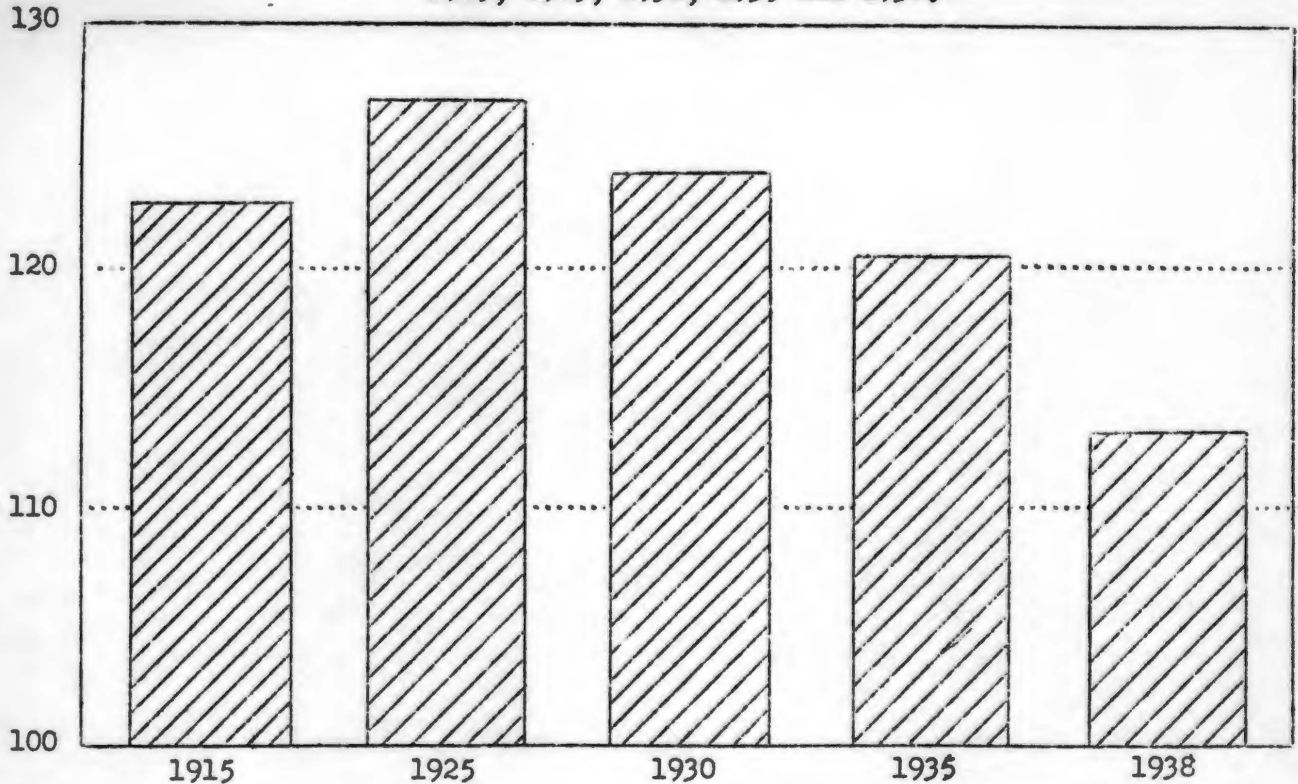
The changes which occurred in the age distribution of the farm population in Hyde county, 1930 to 1938, are shown in Figure 7. Although the time interval is too short to emphasize any long-time trends, it is apparent that a decline in the younger age groups and an increase in the older groups (especially the 45-64 year grouping) have occurred. Factors in this redistribution of the population are the dwindling of the birth rate, greater migration among the younger groups, and a gradual maturing of the population. The decrease in the proportion of the Hyde county population 65 years of age and over may be due to the increased tendency for aged persons to retire to the town.

Like most of the other villages of the state, Highmore has a considerably smaller proportion of its numbers in the younger age brackets and a much greater proportion in the older age groupings than is found in the farm population. Only 28.6 percent of the Highmore population in 1930 was included in the two youngest age groupings, as compared with 35.8 percent of the farm population. Conversely, 28.6 percent of the Highmore residents were in the two oldest age groupings, as compared with 18.6 percent in farm areas. With 8.6 percent of its population 65 years of age or over, Highmore had more than twice as large a proportion of the aged in 1930 than was found in the farm population.

As previously observed, the most significant result of a decrease in the number of children is the curtailment of elementary enrollments, which calls for a reorganization of the existing school structure. The increase of the aged has a number of ramifications. Old age assistance will probably have to be extended to a greater number of persons, with higher costs to society. Population mobility will probably be lessened, church membership will likely increase and public opinion, habits and attitudes will become more conservative.



Figure 8. Males Per 100 Females in the Farm Population of Hyde County, 1915, 1925, 1930, 1935 and 1938.



Source: U. S. and State Census reports, and Farm Security records.

Hyde county, like all areas which are predominantly rural, has always had a high ratio of males to females in its population. Agriculture is essentially a man's occupation, and since so large a proportion of the Hyde county population is engaged in agricultural pursuits an excess of males is to be expected. Because so many of the early settlers were young unattached men, the ratio of males to females was considerably higher in pioneer days than it is today. Figure 8 shows the ratio for selected years since 1915 and indicates a trend toward numerical equality between the sexes. From a high of 127 males per 100 females in 1925, the ratio had dropped by 1938 to 112.3 males to each 100 females. Factors in this trend have been a reduction in the numbers of the foreign-born (who have always had the greatest preponderance of males) and an increase in the number of persons engaged in non-agricultural occupations.

Because of their relatively greater opportunity for women in providing clerical and domestic employment, towns have always attracted women and girls in large numbers. In Highmore, the only incorporated town in Hyde county, there were only 98.4 men for each 100 women in 1935.

The trend toward equality in the sex ratio appears to be a healthy one, since it will probably lead to a greater number of normal families, slow down excessive mobility, and bring a greater number of refinements into everyday living.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. The loss of population in Hyde county between 1930 and 1940 is probably a healthy trend since it has been found that the greatest losses occurred in the marginal areas. A smaller number of people in these areas will probably result in larger units and consequent greater economic security.
2. The increasing tenancy rate constitutes both an economic and a social problem. Economically, tenancy, because of the usual short term lease, makes for a lack of responsibility on the part of the tenant which is reflected in mining of the soil and abuse of farm buildings. From a social standpoint, all social organizations tend to be weaker and more unstable in tenant dominated areas than in localities where owners predominate. There is nothing inherently evil in tenancy itself but rather in the usual way in which it is administered. The policy of short term leases is undoubtedly the worst feature of tenancy as it now exists. It is felt that long term leases of the sliding-scale type would do much to alleviate the present social problem caused by tenancy.
3. Although the proportion of foreign born in Hyde county is declining, nationality culture patterns continue to play a part in the lives of those of foreign descent. This is particularly true with respect to the family, neighborhood groups and church preference and affiliations. The existence, distribution, and characteristic of various nationality groups within the county should not be overlooked in any program of land use planning. It is particularly important to have adequate representation from each nationality group on the planning committee.
4. The falling birth rate has resulted in a declining number of persons in the lower age groups, with consequent reduction in elementary enrollments. Because of the excessive per pupil costs for operating schools for only a few pupils, declining enrollment has recently been recognized as a real problem. Several suggestions for the solution of this problem are offered in the Rural Sociology Pamphlet Number 10, The Declining Elementary Enrollment Problem of Hyde County.

Aging of the population, a lower death rate, and reduction of persons in the younger age groups because of a lower birth rate and outward migration of younger people have resulted in a considerable increase in the proportion of persons in the older age brackets. As a high percentage of these persons are without financial resources, it appears likely that the number of persons needing old age assistance will increase. Attention should also be given to the building of more, smaller, and cheaper apartments to accomodate old people; to the prevention of diseases that afflict the aged, and to providing leisure time activities and facilities for oldsters.

5. The number of males per 100 females seems to be approaching equality in the farm population of Hyde county. This is probably a healthy condition since the trend toward equality in the sex ratio will tend to increase the number of normal families; retard excessive mobility; and introduce more refinements into everyday life.